

Basic Needs

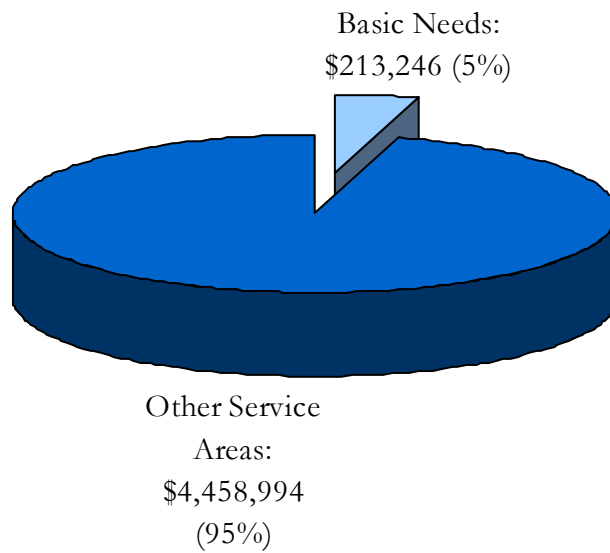
Goals and Services

Programs within this service area meet urgent, short-term food, housing, clothing and transportation needs. Some examples of services provided by programs within this service area include provision of adequate and healthy food; financial assistance for rent, mortgage, or utilities; needed clothing; and assistance or transportation to meet specific public health or safety needs.

Contracted Service Providers included in this Service Area

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Percent of Investment in Basic Needs and Other Service Areas, 2008



Highlights of Community Conditions

TCHHS/VS has departmental and contracted programs that offer services to address residents' basic needs. This issue area includes contracted services that provide food to avert hunger, and that offer one-time and short-term rent and utility assistance to prevent loss of housing and utilities. These contracted services work in tandem with those provided directly by the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. The Department is the largest provider of emergency assistance for individuals and families within Travis County. For elderly or disabled individuals, the County emergency assistance program income guidelines limit participation to households at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline level (FPIG). The income guideline limit for all other people is 50% of the FPIG (see Appendix C for specific income limits). Among contracted service providers who serve individual clients directly, client income eligibility may go up to 150% of the FPIG.

Adequate **food and shelter are imperative to achieve healthy physical and psychological development.** A 2002 study that controlled for the influence of housing type, maternal distress, and stressful life occurrences (e.g., abuse) found that severe childhood hunger was a significant predictor of chronic illness and that it was linked to higher reported anxiety and depression among school-aged children.¹⁶ Another study demonstrated that adults 65 and older who felt that their basic needs were not being met also experienced greater risk of death, signs of depression, and decline in function.¹⁷

Over the last several years, the **poverty rate in Travis County has been greater than the national rate but less than the state rate.**¹⁸ In 2007 (a year with a robust local economy), an estimated 14.7% (or 141,223) of Travis County residents lived in poverty.¹⁹ This rate was lower than the state poverty rate of 16.3% but higher than the national poverty rate of 13%.²⁰

Need for Utility Assistance

Recent data suggest that **a growing number of residents face challenges paying for their utilities.** Austin Energy's Customer Assistance Financial Support Program received 8,578 duplicated requests for utility assistance in 2008, which is an increase of 41% from 6,067 in 2007.²¹ This increase in requests for assistance is much higher than the overall 3% growth in accounts that occurred during this time.²² Between 2007 and 2008, the number of Austin Energy customers with deferred payment plans rose by 33% – up from 103,325 (or 24% of all accounts) to 137,336 (or 31% of all accounts) respectively.²³ In spite of this increase in assistance and other efforts, service was disconnected for non-payment of utility bills in an average of 4,100 households per month during 2008, compared with an average of 3,950 per month during 2007.²⁴

Please refer to the Housing Continuum section of this report for additional information about community conditions related to housing.

Need for Food Assistance

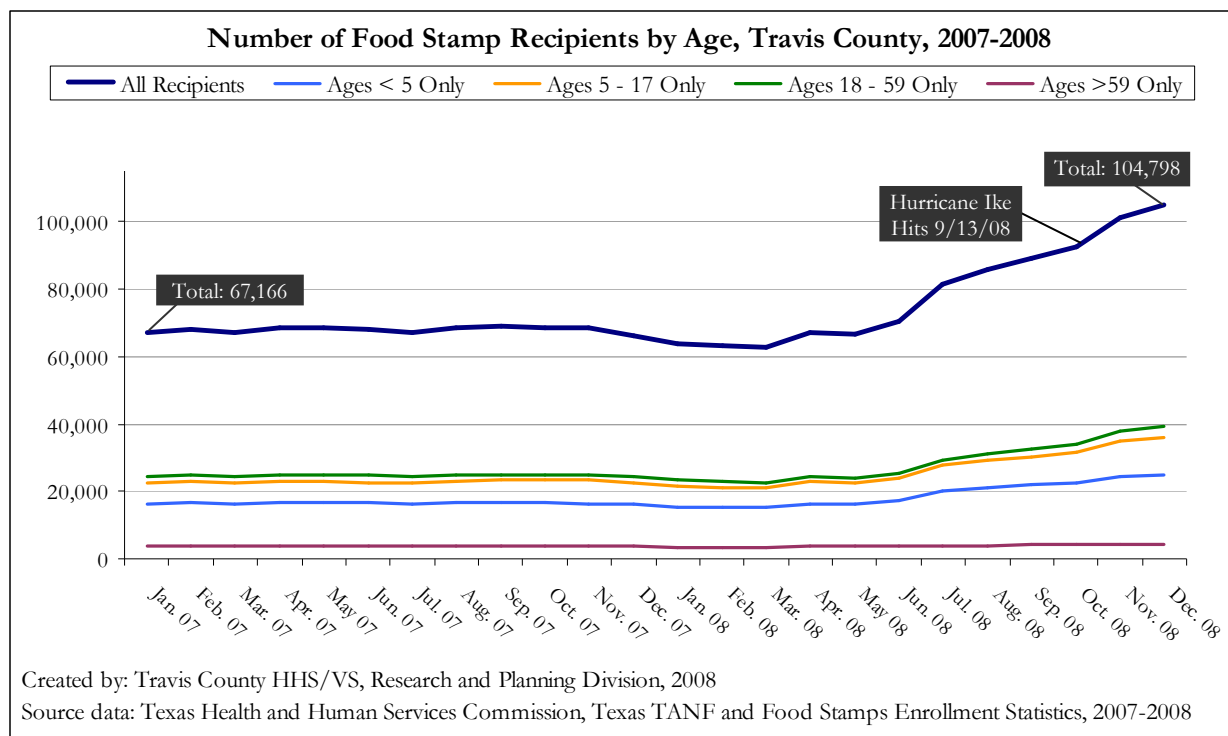
Other recent data, particularly food stamp participation data, suggest that **food instability is rising.** To be eligible for food stamps, a household must be living in poverty or approaching poverty (i.e., with resources at or below 130% of the poverty level).²⁵ Nationally, **the number and rate of people obtaining food stamps is approaching an all-time high.** In fiscal year 2008, 9.3% (or

28.4 million people) of the U.S. population participated in this federal program, up from 2.1% (or 4.3 million people) in fiscal year 1970.²⁶

The number of food stamp recipients in Travis County remained relatively stable from January 2007 through May 2008 and then rose dramatically – by 57% – during the remainder of 2008.²⁷ (See the graph below.) Hurricane Ike created a significant influx of food stamp recipients beginning in mid-September, but food stamp participation in Travis County had already risen sharply (29% or by 19,114 participants) in the four months prior to Ike (or between May and August 2008). Growing need is likely the primary contributor to rising food stamp participation, though increased outreach efforts and more timely application processing may also be pertinent factors.²⁸

These food stamp participation statistics likely underestimate the true need in Travis County. The most recent data indicate that in 2006 **41% of Texans who were eligible for food stamps did not receive this assistance.**²⁹ Food stamp participation statistics may serve, then, as a general gauge of food assistance need rather than a precise measure of need.

Most Travis County residents receiving food stamps are children. In December 2008, children under the age of 5 accounted for 24% of all food stamp recipients, and children between the ages of 5 and 17 comprised 34% of all food stamp recipients. Adults ages 18 to 59 represented 37% of the total population, and adults ages 60 and older constituted the remainder. As the chart illustrates, people of working age and children joined the rolls at the greatest pace since March 2008.

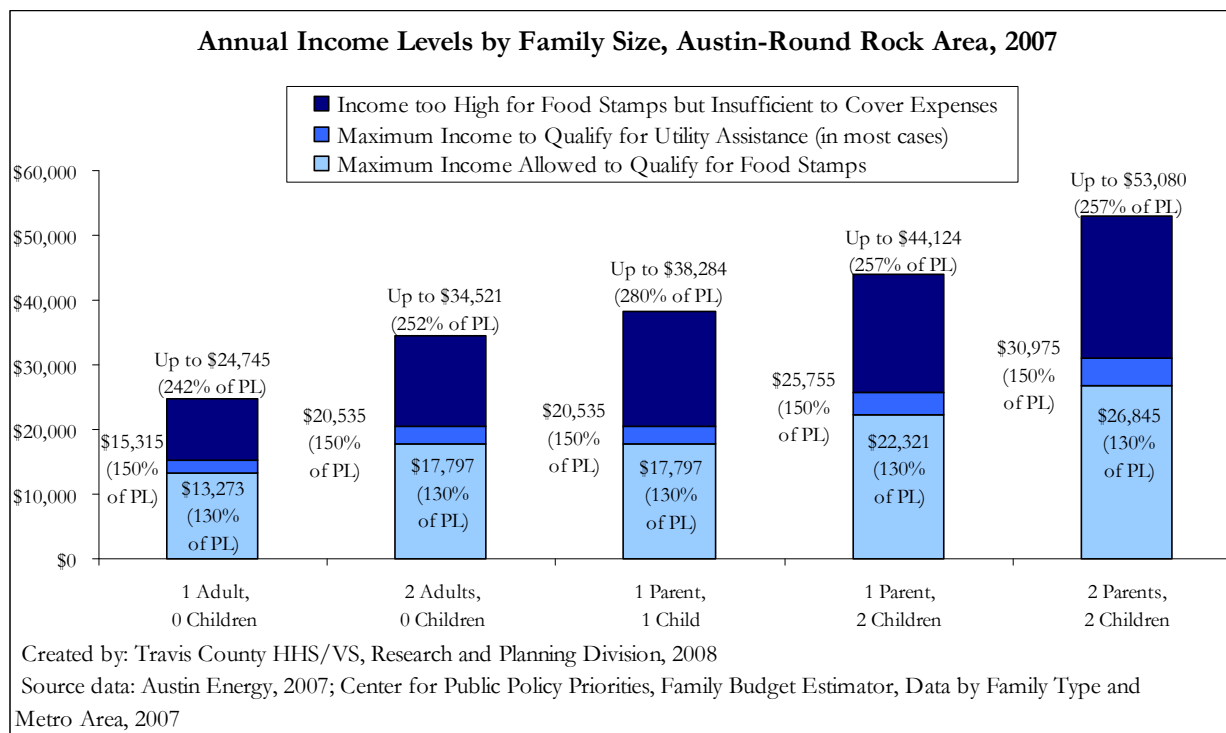


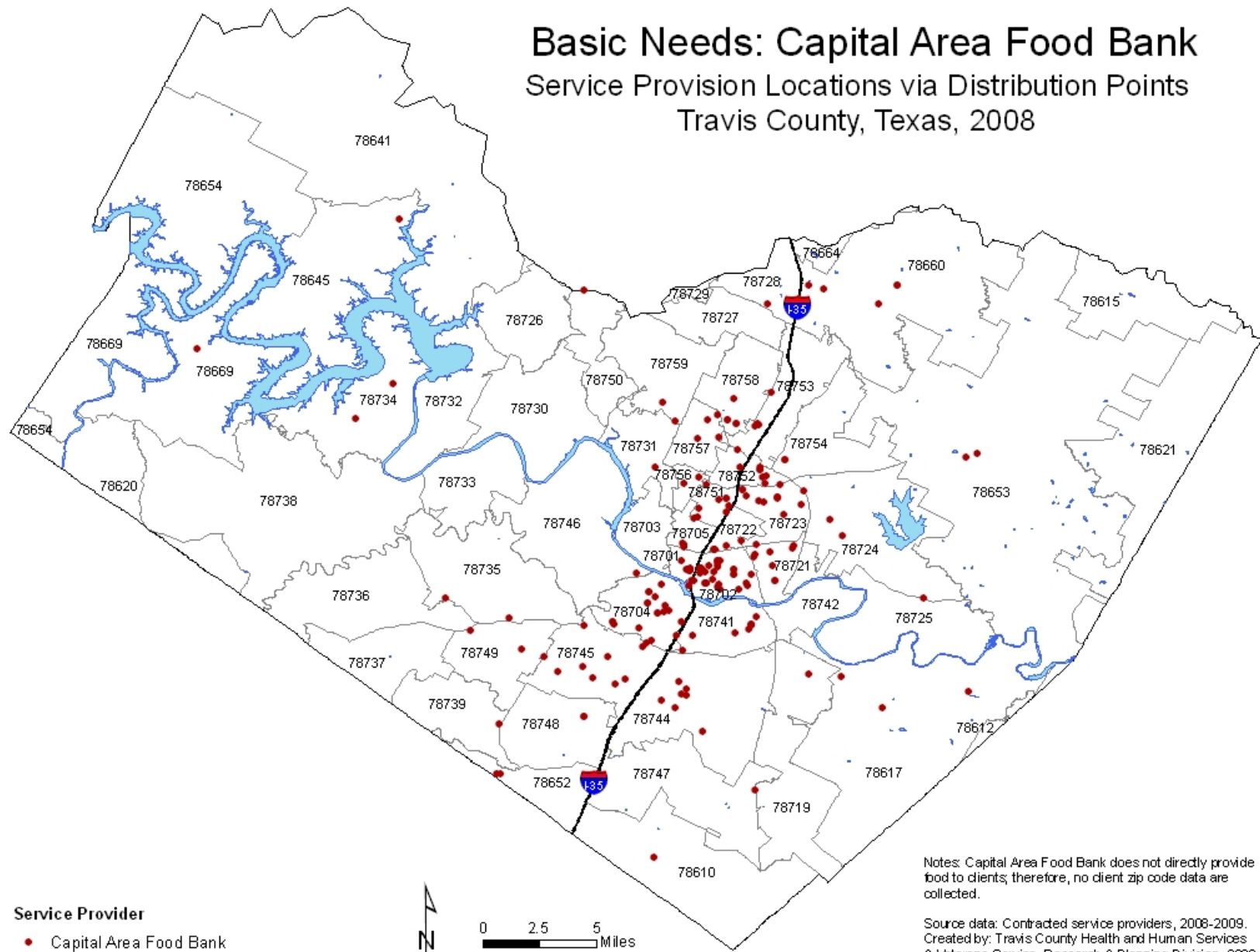
Current payment amounts are insufficient to cover rising food costs for most recipients. In October 2008, the average monthly food stamp payment totaled \$101 for each Travis County recipient. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), even on the thriftiest of meal plans in October 2008, \$101 per month would only cover the cost of a minimally nutritious

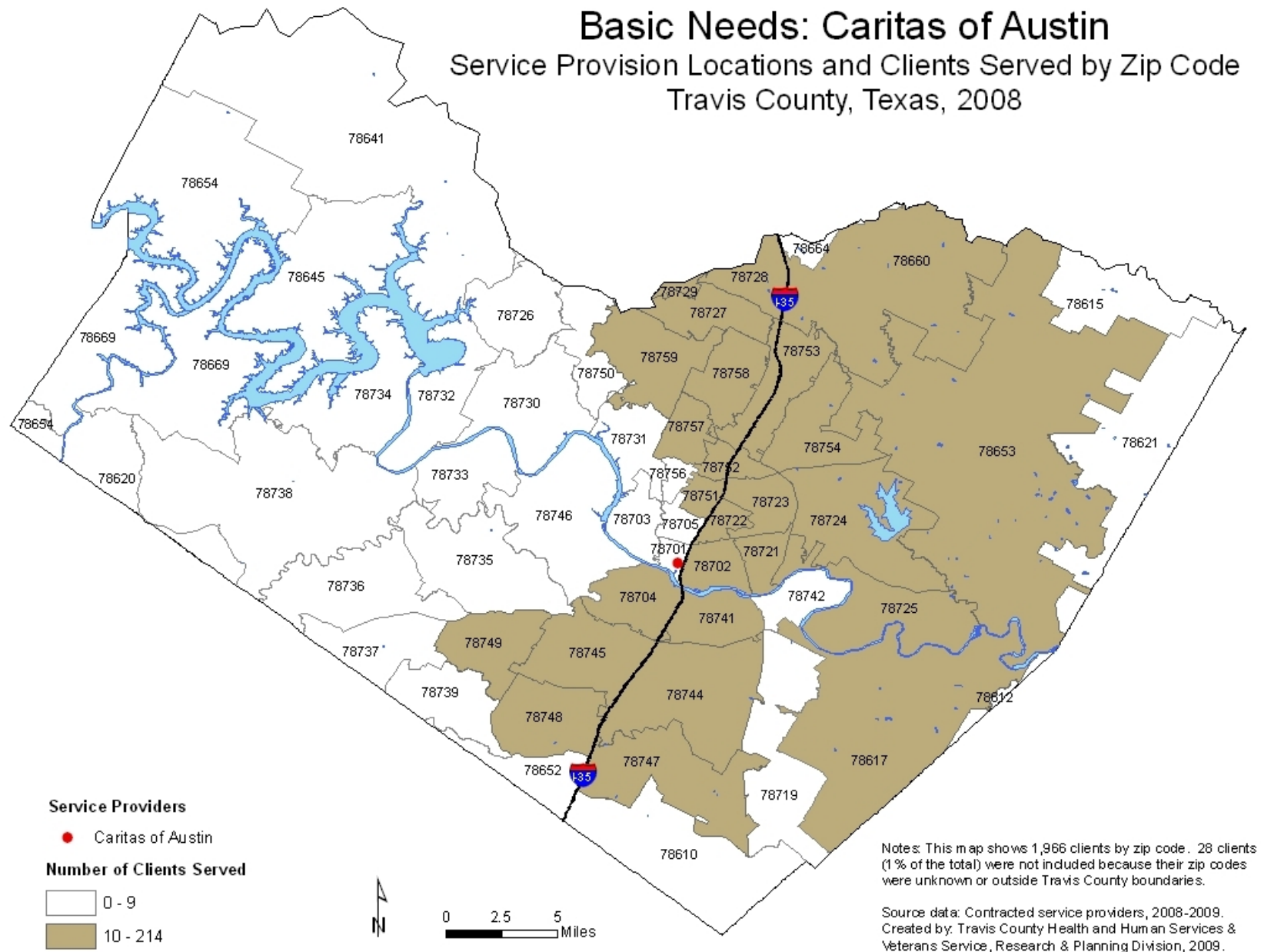
diet for a child five years old or younger, a population that represents only around a quarter of all food stamp recipients.³⁰ The USDA reports that the lowest cost of a minimally nutritious meal for individuals over five years of age would range between \$127.70 and \$175.10 per month. In cases when the food stamp program is insufficient, Travis County residents may rely on local social service programs for supplemental food.

Many people struggling to meet their or their family's basic needs may be ineligible for assistance yet not earn enough to meet the local cost of living. The following graph illustrates this gap.³¹ For example, a family consisting of one parent and one child with an income between \$17,797 and \$38,284 faces challenges making ends meet *but* is left out of the safety net for food assistance. Expenses covered in this analysis include the cost of housing, food, child care, medical insurance, medical out-of-pocket expenses, transportation, taxes less tax credits, and other necessities.

Underemployed Travis County residents unable to access federally-funded food stamp assistance and other such basic needs assistance programs may also rely on local social service programs to help meet their basic needs. Recent changes in related community conditions such as rising unemployment, foreclosures, and cost of living (see Introduction) may greatly increase need for these services.







Capital Area Food Bank of Texas

Food Bank

Program Description

Capital Area Food Bank is the primary source of food and grocery products for other non-profit organizations. The Food Bank does not provide food directly to individuals and families. Instead, other human service agencies stock their pantry shelves with food from the Capital Area Food Bank and then, in turn, directly provide the food to their clients.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Food Bank program for 2008 was \$57,766. This investment comprised 1.2% of the total program budget.

Eligibility Criteria

The distributors receiving the food serve specific populations, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, high-risk teens, low-income families and the working poor, homeless people, and families whose Food Stamp benefits have been cut.

Client Demographics and Client Zip Codes

The Capital Area Food Bank does not directly provide food to clients; therefore, no client demographic or zip code data are collected.

Performance Goals and Results

The Capital Area Food Bank met all but one of its performance goals. In 2008, the program was able to provide over five and a half million meal equivalents to Travis County agencies (see the second output). Staff members note that a slightly lower number of Travis County agencies were served during the year (see the first output). They attribute this result to the merging of agencies and increased collaboration between agencies. However, they reported an overall increase in demand for food (see the third output).

Food Bank Performance Measures, Actual Results, and Goals for 2008

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	% of Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
<i>Outputs</i>			
Number of unduplicated Travis County client agencies provided with cost savings	143	173	83%
Number of meal equivalents provided in Travis County	5,542,954	5,200,000	107%
Pounds of donated food provided to Travis County agencies	6,928,693	6,500,000	107%
<i>Outcomes</i>			
Number of dollars saved by Travis County client agencies	\$11,335,893	\$11,589,945	98%
Percentage of unduplicated partner agencies who reported no complaints on satisfaction survey	98% (61/62)	90% (135/150)	109%

Caritas of Austin

Basic Needs

Program Description

Caritas of Austin's two basic needs programs assist low-income residents with basic needs. More specifically, the Community Support Program provides low-income people and their families with one-time rent or utility assistance. And, the Community Kitchen serves anyone in the community a hot, nutritious lunch five days a week.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Basic Needs program for 2008 was \$155,480. This investment comprised 14.5% of the total program budget. TCHHS/VS also funds the Best Single Source program, which is described in the Housing Continuum issue area section.

Eligibility Criteria

To receive rent or utility assistance, a client must meet three eligibility requirements: reside in Travis County, have a household income at or below 150% of Federal Poverty Income Guideline level, and experience a documented emergency within the past 60 days. The Caritas Community Kitchen serves a nutritious meal to anyone who is hungry.

Client Demographics

Most clients (79%) served by the Basic Needs program were female, and 74% were between the ages of 25 to 55. Over a third (36%) of clients were Hispanic or Latino. Black or African-American clients comprised the largest percentage (43%) of clients, and 30% of clients chose not to disclose their race. Over three-quarters (78%) of clients had incomes at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline level. (See Appendix C for specific guideline income levels.)

Gender	Number	Percent	Age	Number	Percent
Female	1,571	79%	18 to 24	289	14%
Male	422	21%	25 to 36	721	36%
Balance – Not Specified	1	0.1%	37 to 55	759	38%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>100%</i>	56 to 74	196	10%
			75 and Over	28	1%
			Balance – Not Specified	1	0.1%
Ethnicity			<i>Total</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>100%</i>
Hispanic or Latino	713	36%			
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,259	63%			
Balance – Not Specified	22	1%			
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>100%</i>			
Race			Income		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	67	3%	<50% of FPIG	861	43%
Asian	10	1%	50% to 100%	704	35%
Black or African American	854	43%	101% to 150%	249	12%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	0.3%	151% to 200%	29	1%
White	461	23%	>200%	24	1%
Balance – Not Specified	597	30%	Balance – Not Specified	127	6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>1,994</i>	<i>100%</i>

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Client Zip Codes

This program served clients throughout all areas of Travis County; however, a substantial number of clients were located in the eastern areas of the county. The zip code areas with the greatest percentages of clients were East (23%), Northeast (21%), and Southeast (21%). (See Appendix E for zip code classification map.)

Central	Number	Percent	North	Number	Percent	Northeast	Number	Percent	Southwest	Number	Percent
78701	3	0.2%	78727	28	1.4%	78621	2	0.1%	78704	69	3.5%
78705	4	0.2%	78728	43	2.2%	78653	14	0.7%	78735	3	0.2%
78751	16	0.8%	78729	12	0.6%	78660	57	2.9%	78736	1	0.1%
78756	7	0.4%	78757	28	1.4%	78664	1	0.1%	78739	2	0.1%
<i>Total Central</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>1.5%</i>	78758	177	8.9%	78752	85	4.3%	78745	143	7.2%
			78759	34	1.7%	78753	214	10.7%	78748	51	2.6%
East			<i>Total North</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>16.1%</i>	78754	39	2.0%	78749	18	0.9%
78702	94	4.7%				<i>Total Northeast</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>20.7%</i>	<i>Total Southwest</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>14.4%</i>
78721	66	3.3%	Northwest			Southeast			West		
78722	15	0.8%	78641	2	0.1%	78617	32	1.6%	78703	4	0.2%
78723	175	8.8%	78645	4	0.2%	78741	212	10.6%	78733	2	0.1%
78724	94	4.7%	78669	1	0.1%	78744	148	7.4%	78738	1	0.1%
78725	14	0.7%	78726	9	0.5%	78747	18	0.9%	78746	2	0.1%
<i>Total East</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>23.0%</i>	78731	3	0.2%	<i>Total Southeast</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>20.6%</i>	<i>Total West</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0.5%</i>
Other/Unknown			78732	2	0.1%						
Other	8	0.4%	78734	5	0.3%						
Unknown	23	1.2%	78750	9	0.5%						
<i>Total Other/Unknown</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>1.6%</i>	<i>Total Northwest</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>1.8%</i>						

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Performance Goals and Results

Caritas of Austin's Basic Needs program met all but one performance expectation. The program fell short on the first output, which measures the number of households provided basic needs services. Program staff members report that an improved telephone screening process for rent and utility assistance led to an increased number of eligible applicants for this type of assistance and to fewer applicants seeking basic needs services.

Basic Needs Performance Measures, Actual Results, and Goals for 2008

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	% of Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
<i>Outputs</i>			
Number of unduplicated households provided basic needs services	1,994	2,350	85%
Number of unduplicated households receiving rent or utility assistance	1,549	1,600	97%
Number of hot meals served	96,269	100,000	96%
<i>Outcomes</i>			
Percentage of unduplicated clients provided rent or utility assistance that remained in stable housing 30 days after receiving assistance	99% (1,531/1,549)	95% (1,520/1,600)	104%
Percentage of unduplicated clients provided a meal, who were satisfied with the meal, as measured in an annual survey	89% (183/205)	85% (149/175)	105%